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# ENGLISH IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF GOTHENBURG

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# Abstract

**Title:** *English in the Linguistic Landscape of Gothenburg*

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**Abstract:** Linguistic landscape is a discipline that studies signage in a landscape. It is a growing field within linguistics and numerous studies have been made worldwide on the prevalence of signs. Both the language used on signs and the actors behind the signs are of interest for the study of linguistic landscape. The actors are divided between institutional ones, i.e., top-down signs and private ones, i.e. bottom-up signs. Here I present a study of the prevalence of English signs in the city center of Gothenburg. The study focuses on the prevalence of English including English mixed with other languages on top-down signs and bottom-up signs. By photographing signs, mapping and then dividing them into different categories this study shows both the spread of English signs and which domains of society that use English the most. Previous studies show that English is one of the most used languages on signs within the commercial realm in different countries of the world, the category known as bottom-up signage. This study agrees with previous research that English is the most prevalent in the commercial domain. The distribution is visualized on a map, which highlights the different regions and the density of signage in these areas. The results show that English is the most prevalent in the sphere of commerce in the city center of Gothenburg.

NB. Since this study uses colored maps to visualize the results, it shows best in digital form.

**Keywords:** Linguistic landscape, English, top-down, bottom-up, signs, Gothenburg, commerce

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# 1. Introduction

The definition of linguistic landscape (henceforth referred to as LL) explained by the linguists Landry and Bourhis introduces the subject of this study: “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.25). Landry and Bourhis introduced the binary categorization of signs; the institutional, i.e. top-down and the private, i.e. bottom-up (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.26-27). Top-down signs are made by governmental actors while bottom-up signs are made by private or commercial actors. Although linguistic landscape is a relatively new field, it has gained great recognition within the discipline of linguistics and has brought forth an interesting area of linguistic research (Gorter, 2006, p.2). The field of linguistic landscape is a growing subject and takes part in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Modern technology has helped the field to grow. The accessibility of cell phones and cameras has made it easier to record the linguistic landscape worldwide. In addition to this, the increasing interest in the linguistic landscape has become a field that is covering more and more parts of the world with its growing amount of data.

The research of linguistic landscape has evolved over the years. Some of these studies have been observing the prevalence of English and how it is used on signs. English is visible not only as a global language but also as a language with high symbolic prestige (Crystal, 2003, p.126).

Since English is a global language and Gothenburg is the second-largest city in Sweden, a study of English in Gothenburg’s linguistic landscape would show where English is the most visible. The prevalence of a language in the linguistic landscape can present itself by both location and sphere in society. According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p.17-22) language has a linguistic market and linguistic capital. The linguistic market is the symbolic market where languages interchange and where the language has a market value. The speaker of a language has linguistic capital belonging to the language(s) it speaks. Different languages have different market values. Landry and Bourhis (1997, p.32) present a theory supporting the idea of the type of dominance that languages can have within different spheres in society. This market is divided into four different spheres: the demographic sphere, the economic sphere, and the cultural or political sphere. They explain that languages that have economic capital, i.e., economic resources, are exposed by the spheres of commerce and industry through, for

instance, signage in the linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.32). An example of this would be if English as a language with high economic capital and their sphere of commerce in a country like Sweden would use English on signs instead of Swedish. If this were the case, English would be the language having more economic capital than Swedish in Sweden in the sphere of commerce.

Moreover, English is a language of global practice and spread across the world. With the lead position as the lingua franca of the globe, English is the language spread with globalization today. In the book, *English as A Global Language* Crystal (2003) identifies English as a dominant language within different spheres of society. Previous studies have been made in several countries of the world showing the domination of English within the commercial sphere. The commercial sphere has also been of focus of many previous studies. The main reason for this is globalization and the prestige the English language obtains. Backhaus explains this phenomenon to be related to cultural ideas the English language is associated with: “In most cases, English signs do not index a local community of speakers of the language; the phenomenon has been interpreted ‘as a symbolic expression ... to join the English language community and to associate with the values that are typically attached to it (American/Western culture, internationalization, etc.)’” (Backhaus, 2006, as cited in Lou, 2016, p.4)

Sweden’s relationship to English is neither related to colonialism nor political reasons. According to Kachru’s Three Circle’s, which presents the spread of English in the world, Sweden is part of the expanding/extending circle. “The *expanding* or *extending circle* involves those nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle, nor have they given English any special administrative status. In these areas, English is taught as a foreign language.” (Crystal, 2003, p. 60). Still, Sweden is known for having a high level of proficiency in English. Hult states how obvious the proficiency is on the streets in Malmö and Lund, and that travellers easily find the proficiency in English to be quite high which enables Swedes to answer questions in English without great difficulties (Hult, 2003, p.52).

A study of English in Gothenburg’s linguistic landscape would show the spread both in location and in which sphere of society it is the most prevalent. I hypothesize that due to the large linguistic market that English holds within companies and international businesses, the exposure of English in the economic sphere will show to be prevalent in the city of Gothenburg. Together with several other studies supporting the idea that English is dominant in the commercial domains of linguistic landscape the theories of Bourdieu, Landry and Bourhis will

serve as the theoretical foundation for the hypothesis of English being a dominant language within the economic sphere also in Gothenburg's city center.

The purpose of this paper is to study the prevalence of English in the linguistic landscape of some parts of the city center of Gothenburg, by further examining where it is more visible regarding location and domain. Since the center is the most urban area and a neighborhood of more than just commercial and touristic activity, it can be assumed that English will be encountered on both top-down and bottom-up signs. It is also likely that the city center will include a global language such as English on signage to important institutions to facilitate guidance in Gothenburg. Therefore, fixed top-down and bottom-up signs will be the objects of analysis, both in English and English mixed with other languages to see where it is more prevalent in both location and domain. In this study, the focus will be on the frequency of the usage of English signs as it is exposed to us on public streets. The questions I would like to answer are:

- What is the frequency of English in Gothenburg in the field of linguistic landscapes?
- Where is English more common in the aspects of location and domain?

The location of the signs will be presented on maps to point out the position. The domains to which they belong to will be presented in a table to separate and to specify the kind of signs which are visible on the public streets in the research area. Firstly, the signs will be categorized into two categories, top-down and bottom-up signs. Secondly, they will be classified into domains. This division will be made to define and analyze which sphere of society uses English the most. There have been previous studies of linguistic landscapes in Gothenburg but not of the same measures as the one in the present study.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, the terms and concepts used within the research of LL and in the present study will be introduced. This section is divided into four subsections. Section 2.1 explains the linguistic market and linguistic capital. Section 2.2 presents the terms top-down and bottom-up signs. Section 2.3 presents language policy and section 2.4 discusses the Swedish language policy.

### 2.1 Linguistic Market and Linguistic Capital

The theoretical framework includes Bourdieu's concept about the linguistic market, and Landry and Bourhis' further categorization of Bourdieu's concept into the different domains of language within the linguistic market. The sociologist Bourdieu coined the term *linguistic market* as the market where different languages take place. The linguistic market takes place in spheres of society, for example, the economic, or social sphere (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991). In the linguistic market, the market value of a language, i.e., linguistic capital, is a symbolic power that is the worth of knowing a language. For example, English has a high linguistic capital in the world market. Shops use English on signs around the world, and English is prevalent on the internet. Therefore, English has high linguistic capital on the linguistic market, unlike French which has been "devalued" because it is not as prevalent anymore and it does not have as many speakers as it once used to, as Bourdieu mentions (Bourdieu, 1977, p.651).

The term has later been used and further developed by the linguists Landry and Bourhis to categorize language into four spheres: the demographic sphere, the political sphere, the cultural sphere and the economic sphere (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.32). The more dominant a language is within these spheres, the stronger is its linguistic capital, its market value. Landry and Bourhis have instead chosen to call the value of a language according to where the capital is applied, for example, in the political sphere, the market value of a language is called political capital. The political capital of a language in the linguistic market is then the strength of how powerful it is in applying language policies, language laws, and other powers of action of a specific language group. The ethnolinguistic vitality of a language in the economic capital is shown by how the language group, the language users, uses language regarding business and market. This also applies to how the language is used on signs. As mentioned before, the English language has strong economic capital. Many international shopping chains use English on shopping windows and communicate with consumers in lingua franca English. The linguistic



market value of English is high within the sphere of commerce and seem to have a globalized presence. Economic capital is unlike political capital not as fixed which seem to be more dependent on where in the world the language is situated. If the linguistic market is in the United Kingdom, then the political capital of English is strong, compared to the English linguistic market in a country which does not have English as an official language. Whether a language has strong political capital depends on where the linguistic market is located. Swedish is the only official language in Sweden and therefore the language with the strongest political capital in Sweden. Even though English has linguistic capital in Sweden, the question is in which sphere(s) it may concern. In this study, the linguistic capital of English in the center of Gothenburg demonstrated in the LL will be further examined in this study and analyzed where the capital is the strongest.

## 2.2 Top-down and Bottom-up Signs

Signs do not all have the same qualities and are, therefore, classified into different categories. Researchers within LL have separated signs into two main categories, namely public and private signs. Top-down signs are produced by governmental actors and bottom-up signs are produced by commercial and private actors. This distinction is a way to divide between public and private signs. Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 26-27) created the distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs. The question is what signifies the two categories and their differences, and why the distinction is important. To begin with, top-down signs are signs put by the government for the public. These include road signs, place and street names, hospitals, universities, town halls, schools, commute stations and public areas. The other category, bottom-up signs, consists of private, commercial and business signs, for example, store signs, company signs, billboards, flags, public signs. Hence any type of sign not put there by a governmental institution is a bottom-up sign. An example of a top-down sign can be a road sign with *City* written on it showing the direction to the city center, see Figure 1. An example of a bottom-up sign can be a venue sign with the text *CO-WORKING* above the door, see Figure 2.



**Figure 1** Example of a top-down sign, i.e., institutional sign, with the English word *city*.



**Figure 2** Example of a bottom-up sign, i.e., private sign.

The importance of this dual division plays a role connected to governmental language policy. In countries with several official languages, it is common to see more than one language on public signs, often in hierarchal order. The language with the most dominant status is usually put first and the other languages follow the order according to their official status. Swedish is the only official language of Sweden with a group of five minority languages, and therefore the first language written on public signs.

The binary division between top-down and bottom-up signs has been questioned in some cases. Particularly in cases where top-down signs are put by an institution, such as a museum, wherein the property of this museum, there is a museum shop. Since a museum usually is an institution, whose signs are considered to belong to the top-down category and since a regular shop is a commercial activity whose signs are categorized as bottom-up signs, an inconsistency appears in which category the sign of the museum shop is part of. The question

is whether the signs of the museum shop are regarded as top-down or bottom-up signs. This question is discussed by Lou who identifies the issue in her study *The Linguistic Landscape of Chinatown* from 2017. Her approach to this binary division was to analyze the signs with a different framework.

Despite this problematic dichotomy, this study aims to investigate the division of English signs between institutional and non-institutional, and therefore the traditional division top-down and bottom-up will be practiced. While differences between top-down and bottom-up signage can be numerous, the coding scheme for signs which I will use for this study divides the signs between the two categories top-down and bottom-up signs. Consequently, there will be two categories: top-down and bottom-up.

## **2.3 Language Policy**

Language policy is a political decision that sets the frame for how language(s) can be used in a country. A country's language policy plays a significant role in how a sign is produced. Depending on the state, language policy can vary and take different forms. This depends on how many languages there are if the other language(s) is/are oppressed or recognized. Language planning policies vary differently from state to state, and it affects how the language(s) are exposed in public. Signs in countries with more than one official language show the hierarchy the languages have in which languages are exposed for example on official signs. Therefore, the dichotomy of top-down and bottom-up is a way of separating public signs into either being produced by governmental actors, or by private actors. Top-down signs are produced by governmental actors. If a state has a language planning policy, then power relations between the languages are visible on public signs for example in the order they appear or on the size of the text. While bottom-up signs are formed and produced for private use and ownership they may also depend on the country's language policies formed by the government. The linguistic usage of these signs is explained by Van Mensel, Vandenbroucke and Blackwood as follows: "Most official language policies, then, are an indication of who is in charge or who holds the power in a given setting (...) mono-lingual policies were forged to form homogenous monolingual territories uniting one population under one culture, one nationality, and speaking one and the same language " (Van Mensel et al., 2016, p.434). Language policy in a country is, therefore, an important issue in the aspect of analyzing official signs. The language policy shapes how language(s) are exposed in public.

## 2.4 Swedish Language Policy

The increasing use of English in Sweden gave rise to a language policy. The language policy in Sweden was introduced after English became more dominant within different domains of society which resulted in a fear of Swedish losing more ground (Hult, 2003, p. 44). “Mål i mun” (2002) was a language proposition that became a language law in Sweden to strengthen the position of Swedish in 2009. It is a law with guidelines on how the languages in Sweden should be practiced. This law was partly made in consideration of the increasing dominance English gained in the educational and academic fields. It was made aware by the language act that if Swedish would not be given the position as the official language of Sweden with restrictions being made for English, then Swedish will be dominated by English in the future of Swedish society. The potential threat English had was specifically endangering because of its growing usage in turning Swedish into a language not being used in important domains of Swedish society. Therefore, for Swedish to stabilize and secure its political status the language act turned into a language law. (“Språkpolitik - Institutet för språk och folkminnen,” 2019). Therefore, the importance language policy has to this study is to examine the political status English has in Sweden and whether the Swedish language policy has any interference with the usage of English on signs. This suggests that, after Swedish, English is to be found as the second most prevalent language. Based on the background of the threat of English language dominance it can be argued that there would be bilingual signs on display by institutions, with English being the second language used after Swedish.

An additional aspect would be the commercial value English has as it is of great importance for companies to be able to expose their businesses to a wider market. By using English, in both top-down signs, used by government and institutions, and bottom-up signs, used by e.g., shopkeepers, the sign communicates to a broader audience. In worldwide urban cities such as Gothenburg, similar studies from Thailand, Ecuador, Nigeria and Israel, show that English is prevalent. These studies show that the domains of bottom-up signs, namely commercial signage, are the most prominent categories. The preliminary assumption in the present study is that English signage is mostly visible in the economic sphere, such as shops, and trade names as several studies have shown it to be elsewhere in the globe. In addition to that, I assume that English on top-down signs will be marginally less than bottom-up signs and that the top-down signs in English will be equally distributed among its subcategories.

## 2.5 Challenging Categorization

Since the actors behind the signs are of importance, I questioned whether some signs were top-down or bottom-up when photographing them. The uncertainty mostly concerned cases that involved institutional actors in activities of commercial nature. For example, the tourist information owned by the city of Gothenburg should be considered part of the top-down domain. However, it is also a shop where souvenirs, postcards, tours and services are for sale, hence a bottom-up domain. There are a few culture arenas owned by the Gothenburg municipality which engage in commercial activity as well, Liseberg, Scandinavium and Ullevi to mention a few. I would argue that these signs should be considered being part of the top-down category anyhow, regardless of their commercial nature. The argument for it is that these signs are part of an institution under the governing of a municipality, and therefore their signs should be considered top-down sign as the institution may influence the layout of such a sign. Since these institutions are under governmental power and the actors behind the signs are top-down it might reflect itself in the language of the signs more than it probably would on a bottom-up sign. In comparison to the bottom-up domain, top-down signs are more restricted to a political agenda. This is a dichotomy without consideration to the ambiguity which has been encountered in several LL-studies in the past as well. The binary division between signs needs to evolve for the categorization of signs to become less complicated.

Preferably, a third category involving top-down LL-tokens in commerce would perhaps benefit future analysis of top-down use of language in commercial activity in order to see if there is a significant difference within different top-down activities. This ambiguity has been discussed by Lou in her book *The Linguistic Landscape of Chinatown*: “It is frequently assumed that official signs are produced by government authorities, hence alternatively termed ‘top-down’ in Ben-Rafael et al.’s (2006) study of the linguistic landscape, and that unofficial signs are made by social actors in private sectors, hence ‘bottom-up’ in the same study. These two types of signs have been observed to diverge in various ways. Most studies collected in Gorter (2006a) seem to agree that while official signs indicate authoritative power over language use, ‘most non-official signs, in contrast, do not express hierarchies of distinct languages but allow for intermingling of different codes for different purposes’ (Backhaus, 2006: 63). Similarly, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) caution us that variation across different types of sign in a linguistic landscape cannot simply be reduced to power struggles but should be explained by multiple intermingling. The dichotomy between official and unofficial signs also blurs the complexity involved in producing a linguistic landscape (critiqued by Malinowski,

2009).” (Lou, 2016, p.3). Regarding the framework of this study, it was mainly inspired by Ben-Rafael et al. from their study in Israel with separating the signs into the traditional top-down and bottom-up categories and then categorizing them into their domains in society.

### 3. Literature Review

The study of LL is a research field of global interest, and it has given the sociolinguistic discipline the study of public and private signage leading to this type of research being conducted worldwide. Any visibility of written language is the object of study in LL. This field of study is expanding and is an interdisciplinary one, among for example anthropology, semiotics and sociology. LL is a growing and evolving field regarding the methodological framework and theories, with worldwide contributions to the research of signage.

This study was partly inspired by Ben-Rafael et al. (2008) whose article deals with LL in different areas in Israel. In this comparative study, the different areas were chosen depending on the ethnicity and languages used by the inhabitants. Hebrew and Arabic are the two official languages in Israel, and together with English, the languages in focus in the study. The chosen areas in Israel were both homogenous and mixed, ethnically and language-wise. The LL patterns found were then compared to each other. The most salient languages found were Hebrew, English, Arabic and Russian. Since Arabic is a minority language it is not used as much as Hebrew. In the Israeli areas, the languages used in the LL appeared to be mainly in Hebrew and English, and a very low number of appearances included Arabic signs although the language is an official language of the state of Israel. The division and categorization made were firstly between languages, then divided between top-down or bottom-up, and then which activity the signs involved, for example, commerce or place names. The research made in these areas showed that English was the second dominant with visibility of nearly 50 percent of all LL-items, involving both top-down and bottom-up signs.

There are multiple other relevant studies made with a focus on shop signs. Schlick investigated three different cities in Europe, namely Zurich, Uppsala and Klagenfurt (Schlick, 2002). She found that English was the second most frequent language on shop signs. Another study made by her focused on the cities Klagenfurt in Austria, Ljubljana in Slovenia and Udine in Italy (Schlick, 2003). German is the official language in Klagenfurt, Slovene is the official language in Ljubljana, and Italian is the official language in Udine. These three cities belong to different languages and have different political backgrounds. The results from this study were almost similar to the first study she made; the second most frequent language in the LL was English.

Previous research in Sweden shows a significant number of English bottom-up signs (i.e., commercial and private signs). Hult observed the English signage to cover 38 percent of

the commercial signs on a street in Malmö (Hult, 2009, p.97). In a similar study, Brito (2016) shows that in Malmö English was a visible language used in the linguistic landscape of the area Västra Hamnen which lies in the central district, with 13 percent of English signs and 25 percent of Swedish-English signs. Similar studies from different areas in the vicinity of Gothenburg, in which Alingsås shows a high number of as much as 48 percent of the signs found to be in English (Pedersen, 2020, p.16). A study made in the heart of Gothenburg in 2016 reveals that the English bottom-up signs are equal in number to the Swedish ones, as the amount found for the top-down signs there were none (Beloukas, 2016, p.19). In Järlehed's study on signage in the neighborhoods of Olivedal and Gamlestaden in Gothenburg he shows that more than 40 percent of the signs found in the central neighborhood Olivedal in Gothenburg were in both Swedish and English and 10 percent were in only English (Järlehed et. al, 2018, p.48). Most of these studies show the popularity and dominance of English within the commercial field, i.e. bottom-up signs, and the opposite for institutional signs, i.e. top-down signs.

*Svenskan är den fasta inredningen* is a study made by the Institute for Language and Folklore (Bylin & Spetz, 2019), which examined two kinds of institutional places: health care centers and libraries around Sweden. The study shows that English is subordinate Swedish on signs in both usage and layout, but English is still the second most present language on signs even though Sweden has several minority languages to consider. The five minority languages in Sweden are Miänkieli, Romani, Yiddish, Finnish, and Sapmi. The interesting result from this research is the power position English has throughout the country as the second most frequent language, still, after the strengthened statuses the minority languages have gained. Why English is more prevalent than the minority languages probably has to do with the minority languages being tied to certain cities and regions where the languages are much more prevalent.



## 4. Material and Method

In this section, the method of collecting the material will be presented in subsection 4.1, where the choice of material will be explained. Thereafter the framework inspired by previous research will be described followed by the methods used in analyzing the data in subsection 4.2.

### 4.1 Material

The focus of LL in this study are fixed top-down and bottom-up signs since this category is fixed and stable. The data collection consists of signs in English and English mixed with other languages found and photographed in the chosen research area. Even though signs can be removed or exchanged, their placements are more set and easier to observe. Other formats of LL include studying moving object such as people walking around with shopping bags and/or t-shirts with text written on them, as well as cars and other vehicles. Although it would contribute to more data, it is a harder task to complete. Therefore, the collection of data in the present study will involve only fixed signs.

I chose an area in Gothenburg from which the data would be collected. Several criteria guided me to the choice of the urban environment. It was essential for this study to cover an active part of the city that would contribute with a collection of LL-tokens gathered from different spheres of society. The area would contain and include a variety of institutions such as libraries, schools, universities and touristic sites, commerce and residential areas. The reason behind the choice of this area was mainly to examine the most active part of the city within its different contexts and examine where English is exposed and used on signage in different environments. Furthermore, I wanted to have a width to the field of my study that would include both private and institutional activities in the active parts of Gothenburg where both inhabitants of the city and visitors are exposed to the same LL. The map in Figure 3 (Google, n.d.) shows the research area chosen in the Gothenburg city center. The research area is defined within the blue lines together with two streets pointing south and one street pointing to the west. There were in total 958 signs found in the research area. The photographs are available in this link: <https://1drv.ms/u/s!ArA8c0fNr8E8k3K8vWUV9GWW56Bk?e=5VezCh>.



**Figure 3** - Map of the defined study area. (Google, n.d.).

## 4.2 Method

The instrument used for collecting the material was a mobile phone with which I took pictures. The photos taken with the camera contain the GPS coordinates of where the pictures were taken. This piece of information is part of the meta-data containing the GPS location. With the help of a tourist map gained from the tourist center, I marked my route through the defined research area. The empirical data was collected by photographing signs within the defined area. The pictures were taken between the 28<sup>th</sup> September and the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020. After taking the pictures, they were downloaded to the computer and the GPS coordinates were then extracted by a piece of code I put together to position the pictures where they were taken on a map online. The next step was to divide them into top-down (governmental signs) and bottom-up signs (private/commercial signs) on a Microsoft Excel sheet. After the first categorization, the signs were put in subcategories depending on which activity they belonged to. The ten subcategories are ‘commerce’, ‘gastronomy’, ‘health/beauty’, ‘company’, ‘hotel/venue’, ‘tourism’, ‘education’, ‘culture’, ‘art’, ‘other’. For example, a hairdresser shop and a nail studio were part of the same type of activity and therefore put under the subcategory ‘health/beauty’. This category also includes health centers and dentist clinics under the same category:

‘health/beauty’. This choice was made because of the numerous clinics offering both medical and superficial services, which made it hard to put them in just one category. Instead, they were combined into one single category. Then to visualize the division between top-down and bottom-up I made a pie chart to demonstrate the difference in quantity between these two categories. In addition to this, I made a table for the subcategories to be presented and divided to present the spread of the collected LL-tokens. This classification scheme was inspired by an earlier study made in Sweden by Pedersen (2020).

In the beginning, I started by marking the area I wished to cover for this study on a map. Although covering what seemed manageable in the beginning would timewise be inconvenient. The area I have covered still includes institutional and private areas, as was my purpose from the start.

Several issues arose when I collected and analyzed the material. One problem as how to treat several items that belonged to the same unit. According to Gorter (2018), a sign is a piece of text and multiple signs used by the same company belong to one unit and form a collection that is regarded as one item. The different texts from the company will be considered a unit of text since a shop probably will repeat the text several times (Gorter, 2018, p.8). This was a type of framework I did not intuitively think was correct for a quantitative study. In my point of view, different pieces of texts should be photographed individually, for instance, a restaurant menu, a warning sign, or a slogan on the window of a shop should all be counted individually. If the messages on that window were different from each other it seemed more reasonable to take one picture of each message. For example, one picture was taken of the sign with the text, *No smoking* and another on a sign with some other type of information, such as a slogan situated in the same space, on the same wall or the same window glass. In a quantitative aspect, I found it to be a more suitable practice to photograph every sign if they had different kinds of information regardless of their belonging to the same space or not. This was the method I used for both categories of signs. Even though it is not a common practice within the field of LL, at least not to my recognition, the reason behind the method of taking only one picture per collection of unit or window seems to be more suitable for a qualitative approach. These qualitative studies, made by Lou (2016) in Washington Chinatown, and by Coluzzi (2016) in Kuala Lumpur, have also had the procedure of interviewing shopkeepers, residents and people responsible for the signs, which will not take part here.

Other questions that arose while photographing was the binary separation of signs, the top-down and bottom-up categories. In subsection 2.5 in Theoretical Framework, I mention the reasoning of the categorization of these types of signs that are difficult to categorize. In

subsection 2.5 the example of a shop inside a museum was brought up to demonstrate the problem with the difficulty of a binary division. Since a museum is a top-down institution and a shop is a bottom-up establishment then a shop inside a museum does not clearly fit into neither of these categories. However, in this study signage belonging to these top-down domains have been categorized as top-down tokens.

Multilingual signs with two or more languages, containing English and other languages together with English will be part of the data of this study. There is also a type sign made up by macaronic language. Macaronic is the term for words and expressions written with either two or more languages mixed with each other<sup>1</sup>. Even though they are few they are part of the collected data and will be presented in the results as well. Together with multilingual signs this is a group of signs which cuts across the two categories top-down and bottom-up signs.

To conclude, since this is a quantitative and qualitative study, the focus will rely on the prevalence of English on signs with quantitative methods applied and the signs will be discussed with a qualitative approach. Therefore, every sign will be managed as an individual sign, separate from the signs it is surrounded by. Moreover, the institutional signs with commercial activity will be categorized as part of the top-down domain since they belong to the same domain even though the practice is not considered a top-down activity.

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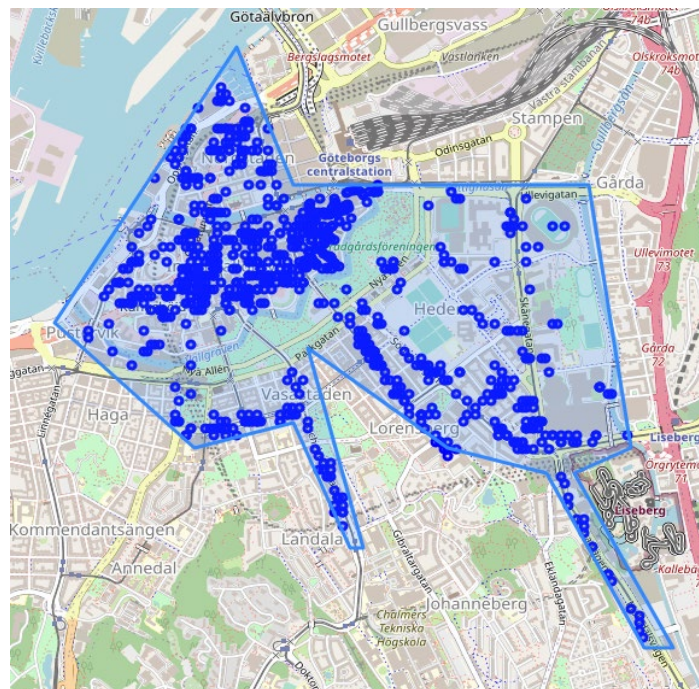
<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Macaronic. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/macaronic>

# 5. Results and Discussion

In this section, the results and discussion in section 5.1 include an analysis of the spread and frequencies overall, and section 5.2 will present the location and frequency of bottom-up and top-down signs. Section 5.3 presents the frequencies of domains. Finally, section 5.4 presents the occurrences of mixed signs. The results will be presented in maps and tables to show the spread of English signage.

## 5.1 Overall Frequencies and Spread of Signs

The first question of this study concerns how spread the English language is in Gothenburg is in the field of LL. In total there were 958 photographs taken of every sign found in the research area. Figure 4 shows the total occurrences of signs in English, with blue markers pointing to where English signs were found. This is demonstrated in Figure 4 below.



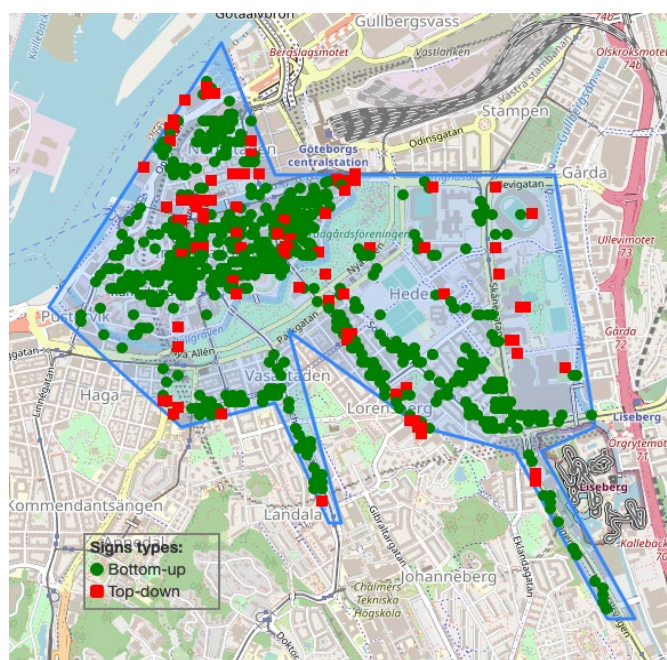
**Figure 4** - English signs marked by blue markers.

As can be seen by the markers the density is in the core of the city center, namely in and around the center core Brunnsparken. Brunnsparken is the main traffic hub of the center and is an area mostly surrounded by shops and offices. The signs also appear prominently on the shopping

street of Avenyn. The globality of English is mentioned by Crystal as being prominent in almost every town and city (Crystal, 2003, p.94). Further out from the center, the signs appear less frequently. The green areas without any blue markers on the map in Figure 4 are open parks where there is not much signage in general. The area to the east of the map shows less frequency of English signs compared to the west side. This area consists of football arenas, venues, the district court, the police station, the jail, high schools, residential areas, and offices. The activity is not very strong in this area which can explain the lack of English signage compared to the more active streets in the western area with its contrast in density. The map clearly shows the spread of English throughout the center, as a prevalent language in the city.

## 5.2 Bottom-up and Top-down Signs - Frequencies and Spread

The second question of this study deals with the division of bottom-up and top-down signs. The total number of occurrences, the 958 signs, were classified into top-downs signs and bottom-up signs in order. Figure 5 shows this distribution and the spread. The map clearly shows the dense frequency of the bottom-up signs (green markers) in the research area, dominating the top-down signs (red markers). The bottom-up signs are more frequent than the top-down signs in the green belt on the north-west side of the research area, while the top-down signs are more evenly spread. In the north-east part of the research area the map in Figure 5 shows a visible decrease in bottom-up signs.



**Figure 5** - Map of bottom-up (green) and top-down (red) signs.

Table 1 presents the frequencies in the categories bottom-up and top-down signs. It was found that bottom-up signs consist of 88.6 percent and top-down signs consist of 11.4 percent. This result agrees with findings of previous studies, e.g., Pedersen's (Pedersen, 2020, p.15) results from four towns in Sweden with 90 out of 92 signs, and Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006, p.21) results from Israel with 75.7 percent in East Jerusalem which both show a high frequency of bottom-up signs in English in relation to top-down signs.

**Table 1:** Table of categorized English LL-tokens.

Type of signs	Number of signs	Percentage
Bottom-up	849	88.6%
Top-down	109	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100%</b>

The bottom-up dominance can be explained by the high density of commercial activity and that in general the number of bottom-up signs far exceeds the number of top-down signs, at least from what is visible on the exterior of public streets. The top-down establishments are fewer in number and do not use excessive signage in the same manner as the bottom-up category.

### 5.3 Domains

The second question of this paper is aimed at investigating where English is more common in Gothenburg by location and domain. When it comes to location, the map in Figure 4 demonstrates the presence of English. In the following, we will look at which domains that were encountered. Table 2 presents the type of domain a sign belongs to and if it is a bottom-up sign or a top-down sign. The domains are divided into nine groups: 'commerce', 'gastronomy', 'health/beauty', 'company', 'hotel/venue', 'other', 'art' and 'culture'.



**Table 2:** Domains within top-down and bottom-up with signs in English

Type of domain	Bottom-up	Top-down
Commerce	251	
Gastronomy	240	
Health/Beauty	137	1
Company	114	
Hotel/Venue	42	
Other	35	23
Art	28	8
Culture	18	63
Tourism	8	9
Education	1	6
<b>Total:</b>	849	109

The four most salient categories are ‘commerce’, ‘gastronomy’, ‘health/beauty’ and ‘company’. There is a remarkably high percentage of English signage made up of commercial signs closely followed by the gastronomy domain. This can be explained by the high commercial nature in the research area.

As previous research has pointed out, for example by Schlick (2003) the commercial capital of English is very high. As we can see in Table 2, ‘commerce’ is the most frequent domain with 251 bottom-up signs. This is also shown by the spread of English signage on streets on the map in Figure 5 where the green markers are very frequent. This category is a collection of different types of commercial establishments. They mostly consist of clothing businesses, jewelry stores, and make-up stores. In Israel a previous study reports that in Jewish neighborhoods the commercial activity shows to be 48.4 percent in bilingual signs, using Hebrew and English (Ben Rafael et al., 2006, p. 22). It seems likely that establishments that wish to expose themselves to an English-speaking community use English to communicate their services and merchandise to a broader audience. Since the area of fieldwork is largely a commercial area it is very dense in comparison to any other activity and top-down signage would probably not surpass the number of bottom-up tokens. Nevertheless, the subject of this study has been the linguistic landscape on public streets and one can see both the spread and



the dominance of English in the most active areas of the city center, while in districts of residential buildings the number of signs severely decrease.

While I did not expect to find English to be as prevalent in the domain of commerce as it has proved to be, a further novel finding was that Swedish clothing chains such as H&M, their affiliated companies and Lindex use English on their signs and at the front of their shops almost entirely. This might be related to these shops being located on sights where tourists visit such as Brunnsparken, Kungsgatan and Avenyn. This can also imply that English is taking over the linguistic landscape of the commercial domain of fashion chains. Regarding the increasing globalization and spread of English, it would be no surprise to see English dominate the sphere of commerce entirely. There is an attractiveness about the language that actors use to give a sense of modernity and globalization.

The second most frequent domain is ‘gastronomy’. This category contains of restaurants, cafés, pubs, and bars. The city center is an area with many of these establishments. The number of signs found in English were 240 related to different kinds of businesses where people can eat and drink. Järlehed et al. report signs in English and English mixed with other languages to be more frequent on signs in Olivedal than in the suburban neighborhood Gamlestaden, (Järlehed et al, 2018, p.48). This could suggest that the high prevalence of English is mainly connected to the central parts of the city.

‘Health/beauty’ is the third most visible signage with 137 signs. Most of the services provided by these facilities are gyms and beauty salons. The English signs of the beauty salons consists of new words describing different modern treatments such as *lash lift*. The gyms found with English signs are health club chains such as Nordic Wellness and Fitness24seven. The name and slogans repetitively cover the windows, doors and walls.

The fourth most frequent category is ‘company’ names. These companies are more than often IT-companies such as the example in Figure 4. This category usually has English words such as *IT* or *technology* in the name. This is demonstrated by Figure 6, with the company names *WISE IT* and *minna technologies*.



**Figure 6** – A (bottom-up) sign of companies with English words.

Top-down signs shows to have many signs in English in the culture domain. Table 2 presents a total of 63 signs. These signs consisted of signs in English and signs in Swedish together with English and were from museums, historical buildings and statues. They are mainly informational texts containing opening hours, fees, and descriptions. English was almost entirely the only foreign language presents on these texts. This is an indication of the English language status as a lingua franca. Unfortunately, the top-down signs are too limited in number to be discussed here.

The question why English is more common in a certain domain. As mentioned earlier in the study the linguistic capital of English is strong in matters of commerce and dominant when it comes to fashion, food, beauty salons and company names. This is clearly presented by the tables with the companies and commerce being prominent with their high amount of signage. ‘Commerce’ (251) and ‘gastronomy’ (240) are two dominant bottom-up domains, with relatively high numbers followed by ‘health/beauty’. These domains are also prevalent establishments in the center which partly explains their frequency. There has been a tangible fear of a status of diglossia between Swedish and English, especially in the high-status domains, i.e., education and politics. Although the commercial domain is not of particular interest for the Swedish language law, the guidelines in the language law are instead aimed at the public sector and administration.

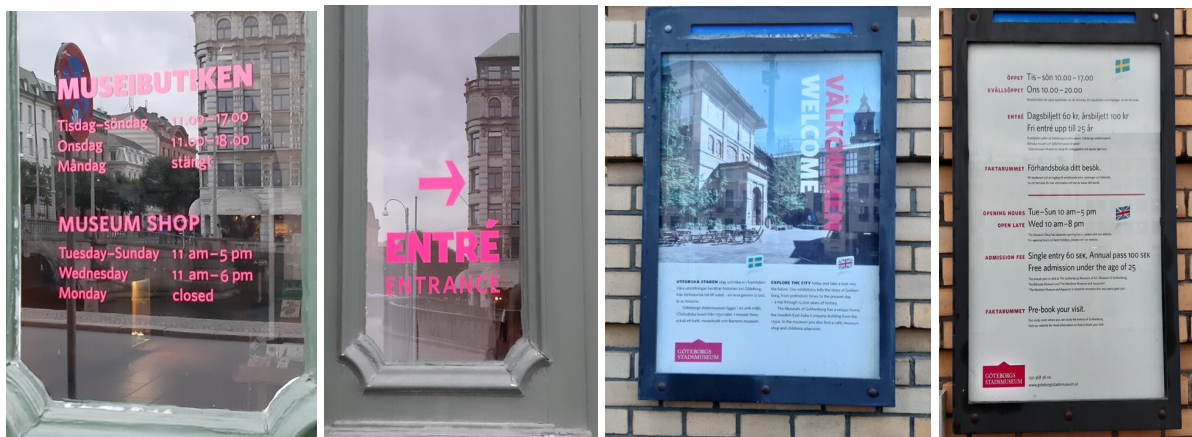
## 5.4 Mixed Signs

The bilingual signs like the historical buildings around the center marked with a sign about their historical background, see Figure 7, were typical for the old residential buildings in the center. The main text is written in Swedish and below an English translation was found on the majority of these types of signs. The text describes the history of the building, when it was built, what the building was used for, and who lived there. The translation is often shortened. These signs are prevalent in the city center, some are top-down put there by the municipality, and others are bottom-up signs owned by companies.



**Figure 7** – A (top-down) sign on one of Gothenburg’s historical buildings.

At the beginning of this study, my theory was that top-down signs would be used in an informational manner, for showing directions, translations of names of institutional buildings et cetera. Oppositely, the usage of another language other than Swedish seems to be unimportant. Signs in the central city mainly expose the name of the institutions, and important sights by their Swedish names including directions to public facilities in Swedish as well, with a few exceptions. In the data collection, there were very few findings of top-down signs for guidance in English. However, some museums had bilingual top-down signs, using Swedish and English. Such an example can be seen both at Gothenburg's city museum (Göteborgs Stadsmuseum) (see Figure 8) and the Alfie Atkins Culture Center.



**Figure 8** – Pictures from the museum of Gothenburg, Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

A few bilingual top-down signs was a line drawn on the sign where above the line the text was in Swedish and below the line the text was in English. Such an example is given by the bottom-right picture depicted above from Göteborgs Stadsmuseum in Figure 8. The signs with Swedish together with English, often had a shorter text in English with smaller font size and placed under the Swedish text.

This brings us to a subject mentioned before in this paper where a few signs are not strictly Swedish or English. In the beginning, I had thoughts about whether to exclude some words that are established and incorporated in the Swedish language such as *drop-in*, *take-away*, *event*, *lounge* et cetera used by most hairdressing salons and restaurants. Figure 9 is an example of this from the ‘gastronomy’ domain with the words *take-away* and *drive-thru*. Although their usage is conventional, before starting this research I did not realize or reflect on how common they are to the extent that they do not occur to you as non-Swedish words. These loan-words are already established within the Swedish lexicon and incorporated within the Swedish vocabulary, but they are still part of the English vocabulary. These loan-words are included in the data as English signage since these words and expressions still are part of the English language and are understood first and foremost by the English-speaking community. The globality and prevalence of English camouflages the fact that common words such as *take-away* and *drop-in* are written in another language than Swedish.



**Figure 9** – Restaurant using the words *take away* and *drive-thru*.

There were some occurrences with the phenomenon of macaronic signs. Macaronic is a product of code-mixing, and hybridization. These are included in the data and regarded as English signage. The term for these kinds of words is macaronic, when two languages like the example in Figure 10 and Figure 11 are hybridized<sup>2</sup>.

A befitting example of a macaronic sign found during fieldwork was at a skatepark named *Actionparken*. The first morpheme *action* is an English word, and the second morpheme of the whole word is *park* which is in both English and Swedish. The word finishes with a Swedish suffix; *-en* the singular definite ending of a noun. Figure 11 contains the English word *electric* but spelled with the letter *k* in the middle as it is spelled in Swedish.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Macaronic. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/macaronic>





**Figure 10** - Macaronic sign using Swedish and English.



**Figure 11** – Macaronic sign using Swedish and English spelling.

Macaronic signs were mentioned by Schlick in her latest research on English shop signs. There she refers to McArthur's use of the term as follows: "McArthur has used the term for signs which mark internationalism and trendiness and cooccur with signs that either maintain or seek to revive local usage or draw on other languages" (Schlick, 2002, p.5). The use of English together with Swedish brings a hybridization revealing a modern and global ambience and gives an attractive name to a park where people meet and skate. Here, English is giving a more attractive touch to it for the people belonging to this subculture in society.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to investigate what the frequency of English in Gothenburg is in the field of linguistic landscapes and to map where English is more prevalent in the aspect of location and domain. The main conclusion that can be drawn from this study's data is that English is a dominant language of bottom-up signs in Gothenburg in the commercial realm as previous LL studies also have shown, among them Schlick (2002, 2003), and Hult (2009). The commercial domain with its large scale of activity uses a type of communication for reaching out to consumers with a high scale of exposure. The commercial domain is accompanied by the domains of gastronomy, health/beauty and company names.

Contrary to my assumption, top-down signs use English in a very marginal manner. Unlike bottom-up signs, the top-down signs are scarce and underrepresented in frequency in comparison. This is demonstrated by the even lower visibility of institutional signs in English on public signage with only 11.4 percent. Even though English top-down signs found in the research area are informational signs about Gothenburg's history, artwork, and statues, the types of signs which holds information about history and culture are more commonly translated with a shorter and often smaller English text below or beside the Swedish text. Their presence concludes that English is prevalent in the top-down domain, although it is kept within the frame of cultural activity. After the language law was established in 2009 the usage of English has been controlled in the top-down domain. However, English is still the second most used language after Swedish according to the investigation made by ISOF (Bylin & Spetz, 2019, p.42) and shows to be a stable language used within the institutional facilities. In conclusion, the linguistic capital of English is of high value within the commercial realm, while in the institutional one, it seems to be under control by the language law.

A category which appeared in both bottom-up and top-down signage was multilingual and macaronic signs. Future research could investigate the LL of English mixed in and integrated with the Swedish language in ways of multilingual and macaronic signs, an uncommon yet interesting topic to analyze.

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